

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2020

The Honorable José E. Serrano
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-310, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Aderholt:

Thank you for your leadership on federal strategies that support opportunities for criminal justice, civil rights, and increase public safety. As you work on the Fiscal Year 2021 Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill, we urge you to increase funding levels for the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division to at least \$200 million (+46.8 FY2020).

The Civil Rights Division, also known as CRT, of the U.S. Department of Justice, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, works to uphold and preserve the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans, including some of the most vulnerable members of our society. The Division is responsible for enforcing Federal statutes that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and religion. As one of its central tools for accomplishing police reform, restoring police-community trust, and strengthening officer and public safety, CRT has the authority to investigate and litigate cases involving “a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers” that violate Constitutional or federal rights.¹

For generations, our black and brown citizens have lived with the realistic fear that they are a target of systemic racism. Studies show that since 2005, there have been more than 13,000 deadly police shootings in the U.S., which averages to nearly 1,000 cases a year of officers shooting and killing someone or two to three a day. Out of those 13,000 deadly police shootings, only a small fraction of 106 officers have been charged with murder or manslaughter.² Our country must take steps to address the injustice and inequality unfairly placed in the hands of innocent people.

As a Congress, we must move with urgency to support our American citizens and take the initial steps to address any inequity that exists in our nation. Increasing the funding levels for Fiscal Year 2021 for the Civil Rights Division will help bolster and strengthen the critical work that they do and provide them with the resources they need to investigate, prosecute, and seek justice for individuals in cases where law enforcement departments engaged in unconstitutional policing.

¹ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/law-enforcement-misconduct-statute-42-usc-14141>

² <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/police-shootings-numbers/85-d8861f64-e1ae-4cbb-9734-d69c0e34ca32>

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We appreciate your attention to civil rights in the past, but we can and must do more. Federal investment in civil rights is fiscally and socially responsible. When we invest in civil rights, we not only protect vulnerable communities, but we also help shape our nation's definition of equal opportunity for all. We believe that increased funding for the federal civil rights division is necessary for our citizens and for our future. That is why we urge Congress to continue its strong support for the DOJ Civil Rights Division and appropriate at least \$200 million for FY 2021.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


TONY CÁRDENAS
Member of Congress

/s/

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

/s/

ANDRÉ CARSON
Member of Congress

/s/

JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

/s/

GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR.
Member of Congress

/s/

YVETTE D. CLARKE
Member of Congress

/s/

WM. LACY CLAY
Member of Congress

/s/

DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress

/s/

PETER A. DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

/s/

SUZAN K. DELBENE
Member of Congress

/s/

BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress

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/s/

RUBEN GALLEGOS
Member of Congress

/s/

ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress

/s/

JAHANA HAYES
Member of Congress

/s/

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, III
Member of Congress

/s/

RO KHANNA
Member of Congress

/s/

ANN MCLANE KUSTER
Member of Congress

/s/

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

/s/

ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress

/s/

JERRY MCNERNEY
Member of Congress

/s/

GREGORY W. MEEKS
Member of Congress

/s/

GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress

/s/

STEPHANIE MURPHY
Member of Congress

/s/

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress

/s/

DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.
Member of Congress

/s/

DEAN PHILLIPS
Member of Congress

/s/

KATHLEEN M. RICE
Member of Congress

/s/

BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress

/s/

GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLON
Member of Congress

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/s/

MICHAEL F.Q. SAN NICOLAS
Member of Congress

/s/

KIM SCHRIER, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/

DAVID SCOTT
Member of Congress

/s/

ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress

/s/

ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress

/s/

DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress

/s/

DAVID TRONE
Member of Congress

/s/

JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress

/s/

NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress

/s/

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress